

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. House of Representatives today passed a resolution honoring Asian American and Pacific Islander soldiers who fought in the U.S. Civil War, culminating a five-year long battle by Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) to help correct the historical record.

Historians have recently uncovered evidence that hundreds of soldiers of AAPI heritage fought on both the Union and Confederate sides, continuing a long tradition of significant AAPI contributions to the history of the United States since the Colonial Era. H. Res. 415 posthumously honors Edward Day Cohota and Joseph L. Pierce, both of Chinese ancestry, as examples of this overlooked group of men.

“The history of America would be totally different without the contributions of Asian Americans. From hard labor building the transcontinental railroad linking our coasts, to the academic contributions ranging from philosophy to medicine, Asian Americans have been an integral part of making our country great,” said Rep. Mike Honda. “I am pleased that heroes such as Pierce and Cohota will finally take the place they deserve in our nation’s memory.”

The resolution, co-sponsored by more than 50 legislators from both parties, focuses on the actions of Cohota and Pierce, the two most widely documented AAPI Civil War soldiers. Cohota’s comrades gave testimony of the seven bullet holes in his coat during the battle of Drury Bluff. Pierce fought at the Battle of Gettysburg, volunteering for a dangerous assault on Bliss Farm, a bloody no-man’s land between the Union and Confederate armies. Both men were Union soldiers.

Despite the sacrifice of hundreds of men such as Pierce and Cohota, the bigoted laws of the day denied them the right to naturalize as U.S. Citizens. Honda said this resolution was the least that could be done to honor their memory.

“As a teacher and an educator of more than 30 years, I believe our students should learn about these exploits in their history books; they should learn that from the start our country’s history has been rich in diversity,” Honda said. “Also it is very important for our community to see their ancestors’ contribution acknowledged. I thank groups such as the Chinese American Citizens Alliance and all my colleagues in Congress who made possible this long overdue resolution.”